St. Cloud VA

UPDATE

March 20, 2020

A monthly newsletter for Veterans served by the St. Cloud VA Health Care System, and for those who serve them. Send news items and comments to St. Cloud VA Health Care System, Attn: Public Affairs Officer, 4801 Veterans Drive, St. Cloud, MN 56303, or via email to barry.venable@va.gov

Current Operations Update

Due to the COVID-19 national and state emergency declarations the St. Cloud VA HCS is implementing numerous actions to safeguard Veterans served by the St. Cloud VA, our employees and the public.

All unscheduled patients and those with flu-like symptoms are asked to call first! We are open for business, but if you do not have a scheduled appointment or have flu-like symptoms such as fever, cough and shortness of breath, call us at 320-252-1670 and select Option 2, or, if after-hours, select Option 3 before you visit the medical center or local clinic. If you need to be seen for any symptoms described above, please call first. In addition to calling first, consider using virtual care options such as telehealth or My HealtheVet Secure Messaging.

If you need help learning how to use or set up your device for telehealth, connected Care apps or MyHealth*e*Vet, call the Health Hub at 320-252-1670, Ext. 7271.

Some non-emergent services are curtailed or postponed, and many appointments are being converted to telehealth, Connected Care and telephone appointments.

CDC, CMS and MHA have recommended the postponing of elective surgeries and nonessential procedures. We are contacting patients who have upcoming elective surgeries or procedures regarding their care plans in light of the postponement.

Other adjustments are in effect to support COVID-19 transmission reduction efforts. These include:

- Routine and walk-in Audiology and Optometry appointments and services have been postponed until at least April 3, 2020. Veterans with scheduled appointments during this period are being contacted for rescheduling, and a process to facilitate equipment repairs is under development.

- Prosthetics and Respiratory Therapy are minimizing face-to-face interactions and walk-in services are being curtailed. All Veterans needing to reorder CPAP supplies

and/or who have other prosthetic questions, please call (320) 255-6385.

- Essential outpatient groups will continue as usual if virtual care options are not possible. All nonessential outpatient groups and classes will move to virtual care.

- Additionally, we are working to convert as many face-to-face appointments in other areas to virtual care or telephone appointments as is possible.

- The daily Minneapolis VA shuttle bus has ceased operations.

No Building Entry without Screening
In concert with CDC and MDH guidelines, the St. Cloud VA HCS is conducting screening of everyone prior to allowing entry.

Individuals arriving at VA Clinics in Alexandria, Montevideo and Brainerd will be prescreened by staff in vehicles. Upon arrival at the clinic park your vehicle and stay in the vehicle until a staff member visits with you and provides additional instructions.

Individuals arriving at the St. Cloud VA Medical Center can anticipate altered vehicle traffic patterns and roadside screening points.

- All outpatient Veteran and visitor vehicle traffic must enter the St. Cloud Medical Center campus via the Veterans Drive main entrance road. The 44th Ave. N./12th St. N.

entrance is closed to all traffic except for MetroBus vehicles.

- All arriving vehicles will be routed through a roadside checkpoint and met by a staff member. They will greet you, ask some screening questions, and guide you to the next steps of your visit. Please follow the instructions provided to you.

- After passing through the checkpoint, on weekdays all interior campus roads and parking lots are available for use. Some parking lots will not be available on weekends.

The screening consists of four questions:

Question 1: What is the purpose of your visit to the facility?

Question 2: Do you currently have any of the following symptoms: fever, new or worsening cough or shortness of breath, or flu-like symptoms?

Question 3: Have you traveled to an area with widespread or sustained community transmission of the Coronavirus or had close contact with someone who has traveled to one of these areas?

Question 4: Have you been in close contact with someone, including a healthcare worker, confirmed to have the Coronavirus?

Per CDC guidance and VA protocols, individuals known to be at risk for a COVID-19 infection are immediately isolated to prevent potential spread to others.

Building entry points are also limited.

Veterans attending appointments at the St. Cloud VA Medical Center should plan to enter the buildings once. Those exiting the buildings and desiring to return will undergo screening again.

At the St. Cloud VA Medical Center, all outpatient Veterans, visitors, volunteers and vendors must enter at the following locations:

- Bldg. 1 — Main Entrance open 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. weekdays, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. weekends.
- Bldg. 116 — Rehabilitation Center, open 6 a.m. to 4:45 p.m., weekdays. Veterans with appointments in Bldg.116 or Bldg. 51 may use this entrance. For appointments in other locations in the medical center please use another entry point.
- Bldg. 111 — Outpatient Mental Health Clinic, open 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., weekdays. After 4:30 p.m. and weekends by appointment only. Staff & Veterans in the MH RRTP can use the entrance from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. 7 days a week.
- Bldg. 48/49 — Entrance Pavilion, open 6 a.m. to 10 p.m., 7 days a week.

All other entryways at the facility are not available for use.

Click here for helpful maps.

Visitor Restrictions
VA Community Living Centers (CLC), Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program (RRTP), and the MH Acute Unit have implemented safeguards aimed at limiting COVID-19 exposure risk for patients who reside at a VA facility. To minimize the risk of exposure, no outside visitors will be permitted to see residents. In the CLC, the only exceptions will be in compassionate cases, when Veterans are in their last stages of life on hospice units. In those cases, visitors will be limited to a specific Veteran's room only. In the MH Acute Unit, by appointment only if visitor is vital to patient's recovery. Again, we apologize and understand the desire to visit your Veteran, and hope this situation is resolved soon.

Tips to say safe!
Everyone is encouraged to take preventative actions to avoid being exposed to the virus:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Stay home if you are sick or becoming sick.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- If you have symptoms or have been exposed to someone with symptoms, or do not have a scheduled appointment, call the VA before going to the facility.

For the latest VA updates on coronavirus and common-sense tips on preventing the spread of disease, visit https://www.publichealth.va.gov/n-coronavirus/

Need urgent care? Here's how to locate a VA Community Care Network provider.

The contractor for VA's Community Care Network in our area is changing from TriWest to Optum Public Sector Solutions, Inc. (Optum).

Veterans seeking to obtain urgent care from a Community Care Network (CCN) provider are reminded of the following key points:

- Urgent care visits in community settings must be made to providers in the VA's Community Care Network (CCN).
- To find an urgent care location in VA's network, **use the VA Facility Locator at https://www.va.gov/find-locations/.** The Locator tool also contains driving directions and phone numbers for network providers. Enter your location to find nearby providers and call the location to get hours of operation.
- **Please visit the Locator tool before every visit as network provider lists may change.**

Eligible Veterans can also visit the Urgent Care Center in Bldg. 1 at the St. Cloud VA Medical Center, which is open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., 365 days a year. Additionally, same-day services are available by calling your PACT team.

VA Health Chat

Have you heard about VA Health Chat? With VA Health Chat, St. Cloud VA Veterans can receive care from VA without stepping foot into a facility.

Forgot to ask a question during an appointment? In as little as 60 seconds, you are connected to a VA health care team member, ready to give you medical advice.

Having a reaction to a medication or need a prescription filled? VA health care team members can help determine next steps with medication issues or can help you order your prescription refills.

VA Health Chat is available on the VA App Store, Google Play, and Apple's App Store. Chat hours are Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

To access VA Health Chat, you will need either a My HealtheVet premium account User ID and password, DS Logon, or ID.me. For more information on creating VA credentials, click here.

We also encourage you to complete the survey at the end of your chat encounter. Your feedback will help us determine if VA Health Chat availability should be expanded.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Canceled: Intro to Whole Health
Wednesday, April 1   9 -11 a.m.
St. Cloud VA, 4801 Veterans Drive, Bldg. 29
Room 20E
This two-hour, peer-led session explains the Whole Health approach to healthcare. Discover what matters to you and how you can be at the center of your own care. No reservation required.

Canceled: Intro to Whole Health CBOC Locations
Wednesday, April 1   2-3:30 p.m.
Alexandria, Montevideo and Brainerd CBOC's
This two-hour, peer-led session explains the Whole Health approach to healthcare. Discover what matters to you and how you can be at the center of your own care. Veterans attending at a CBOC location should contact their clinic to reserve their spot: Alexandria 320-759-2640; Montevideo 320-269-2222; Brainerd 218-855-1115.

Veterans Affairs Radio Show
Monday, April 6   8:10 -8:30 a.m.
KNSI AM 1450/FM 103.3

Appointments by phone only: Veteran's Law Clinic
Tuesday, April 7   Noon -2 p.m.
Free legal consultation for Veterans by appointment only. Family Law, Child Support, Employment, Social Security, Housing and Expungement are the topics that are covered. This clinic is not for criminal issues. For more information or to schedule an appointment please contact Central Minnesota Legal Services at 320-253-0138 or 800-622-7773.

Coffee Talk
Friday, April 10   2-4 p.m.
St. Cloud VA, Bldg. 29, Room 20E
An informal orientation focused on "how to" use VA health care, including Q & A and optional tour. New this year! Coffee Talks now also include *Intro to Whole Health*, all in one convenient session. To attend at a CBOC location please call the Health Hub at: 320-252-1670, Ext. 7271 to reserve a spot.

Voices for Veterans Radio Show
Wednesday, April 15   8:10-830 a.m.
WJON AM 1240

Veteran's Law Clinic
Tuesday, April 21   Noon -2 p.m.
Free legal consultation for Veterans by appointment only. Family Law, Child Support, Employment, Social Security, Housing and Expungement are the topics that are covered. This clinic is not for criminal issues. For more information or to schedule an appointment please contact Central Minnesota Legal Services at 320-253-0138 or 800-622-7773.

Canceled Free Drop-in Legal Clinic for Veterans
Tuesday, April 28,   9 a.m.- 3 p.m.
St. Cloud VA, Bldg. 8 (Auditorium) Free legal consultation for Veterans for housing, employment, benefits, debt collection, expungement, family law including child support. For more information please call 651-200-4750.

For a complete Calendar of Events, go to https://www.stcloud.va.gov/calendar.asp

Quick Reference Phone List

Main St. Cloud VA HCS Phone Number   **320-252-1670 or 800-247-1739**
TDD User   320-255-6450
Max J. Beilke VA Clinic, Alexandria   320-759-2640
Brainerd VA Clinic   218-855-1115
Montevideo VA Clinic   320-269-2222
Veterans Crisis Line   **800-273-8255 Press 1**
Homeless Veteran Hotline   877- 424-3838

Billing:

- VA Care   866-347-2352
- Care in the Community (non-VA care)   877-881-7618

Caregiver Support Team   Ext. 7283
Chaplain Service   Ext. 6386
Community Care Referrals   Ext. 6401
Discrimination Complaints   Ext. 6304
Eligibility   Ext. 6340
Nutrition Clinic   Ext. 6376
Transition & Care Management Program   Ext. 6453
Patient Advocate   Ext. 6353
Pharmacy Refill Line   855-560-1724
Privacy Officer   Ext. 6408
Public Affairs Office   Ext. 6353
Release of Information (Medical Records)   Ext. 6336
Transportation   Ext. 7622
TRICARE   844-866-9378
Voluntary Service   Ext. 6365
VA Police   Ext. 6355

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